



**ANSWER TO A QUESTION  
FOR THE RECORD**

Following a Hearing on  
**CBO's Appropriation Request  
for Fiscal Year 2022**

Conducted by the  
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

JUNE 3 | 2021



*On April 28, 2021, the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch of the Senate Committee on Appropriations convened a hearing at which Phillip L. Swagel, the Congressional Budget Office's Director, testified about the agency's appropriation request for fiscal year 2022.<sup>1</sup> After the hearing, Ranking Member Braun submitted a question for the record. This document provides CBO's answer. It is available at [www.cbo.gov/publication/57252](http://www.cbo.gov/publication/57252).*

## **Ranking Member Braun's Question About How CBO Adjusts Its Resources to Meet Congressional Priorities**

**Question.** Dr. Swagel, your budget request includes funding for four new hires who would focus on infrastructure, energy, and climate change issues. Your budget also specifically mentions that the workload associated with analyzing appropriations bills continues to be heavy.

Priorities for Congress can change rapidly. How do you adjust resources, including staffing allocations, to meet the changing priorities of Congress?

**Answer.** To accommodate the Congress's changing agenda, CBO shifts staffing—sometimes very quickly—and develops new teams, analytical tools, and processes. For instance, the agency swiftly focused its resources, including several dozen analysts, on modeling the economic and budgetary effects of the 2020–2021 coronavirus pandemic and on supporting the Congress as it responded to the pandemic. As part of that effort, CBO established a working group of 11 staff members from

different parts of the agency that was devoted to understanding the pandemic's path.

More broadly, CBO can shift resources efficiently because of its increased use of assistant analysts, who can move from one topic to another to support more senior analysts when demand surges for analysis of a particular topic or when additional assistance is needed for a complicated estimate. Also, the agency continues to expand its use of team approaches for large and complicated projects. That approach has been particularly effective in enabling CBO to produce timely analysis of legislation involving health care.

CBO aims to balance its responses to current Congressional needs with preparations to meet future ones. Sometimes priorities can change very quickly, as they did in 2020, and CBO then adjusts resources accordingly. But the agency also strives to anticipate the types of analysis that the Congress will need. Recently, for example, CBO realigned its divisions to better address three priority areas: health; income security; and climate, energy, and infrastructure. To support those areas, CBO has been hiring staff members this year. It is seeking to hire four more staff members in 2022 to provide more analysis of infrastructure, energy, and climate-change issues—areas in which CBO expects heightened legislative activity.

Also, with a larger staff, CBO would have several people with overlapping skills who could handle surges in demand for analysis of a particular topic or provide additional assistance for a complicated estimate. In some cases, those skills would consist of expertise related to particular topics, and in other cases, they would be more technical, such as the ability to design and improve simulation models.

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1. See testimony of Phillip L. Swagel, Director, Congressional Budget Office, before the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, *CBO's Appropriation Request for Fiscal Year 2022* (April 28, 2021), [www.cbo.gov/publication/57087](http://www.cbo.gov/publication/57087).